

Subpart I – Exhibits
Part 600 – Federal Grants and Cooperative Agreements
600.195b

SAMPLE FORMAT FOR ANNOUNCEMENT (NRCS)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

SOLICITATION NO. NRCS-42-LA-98

WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM RESTORATION

SUMMARY

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program to restore and protect wetlands on private property. It is an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal agricultural land. Congress authorized WRP under the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended by the 1990 and 1996 Farm Bills. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the program in consultation with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and other federal agencies. WRP is funded by the Commodity Credit Corporation. There are presently 98,500 acres in Louisiana enrolled in WRP.

CATALOG OF DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER: Wetlands Reserve Program—10.072.

DATES: Each applicant must submit one original and five copies of their proposal to Patti D. Woods, Contracting Officer, USDA-NRCS, 3737 Government Street, Alexandria, LA 71302 not later than August 3, 1998, 3:00 p.m. c.s.t. Applications received after that time will not be considered. Proposals will not be accepted by fax.

APPLICATION CONTENT

1. The application package must be submitted with OMB Standard Form 424 (REV. 4-88, including 424A and 424B), Application for Federal Assistance, with the required information filled in and the certified assurances signed. While the Form 424A deals with budget information and Section B identifies Budget Categories, the available space does not permit a level of detail that is sufficient to provide for a meaningful evaluation of the proposed total costs. A supplemental sheet shall be provided that presents a detailed breakdown of the proposed costs, as well as any costs that the applicant indicates will be contributed in support of this project. Applicants shall assume that awards will be made by September 30, 1998 and should prepare their applications accordingly.
2. The application shall include a program narrative statement of not more than 10 pages that addresses the following as a minimum:
 - a. A description of the resources and experience of the organization necessary to successfully complete the project.
 - b. The proposed price per acre for site preparation and vegetative restoration, a price for water control structure installation, and a price per cubic yard for earth work, i.e., levee construction and a levee breach.
 - c. The organization's level of commitment in terms of the staff, equipment resources, and/or funding support necessary to leverage the project.

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- d. A description of the capabilities to fulfill the terms of the cooperative agreement, including a brief description of the organizational entity and of the qualifications, employment status, current responsibilities, and proposed level of effort for the project director, and staff responsible for implementation. Resumes for key personnel should be included in the appendix.
- e. List of past experiences with wetland restoration projects.
- f. The application shall include an appendix. Material should be included only when necessary to support information provided in the narrative. Copies of documents, brochures, etc., are encouraged to demonstrate experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities.

PERIOD OF SUPPORT

The project described in the announcement will be supported through the award of one or more cooperative agreements depending upon the merit of the applications received and the availability of funding. It is anticipated that the cooperative agreement(s) will range from \$6,000,000 to \$10,000,000 over a five-year period. Project efforts involving the restoration of designated WRP sites must be completed within three years after funding.

ELIGIBILITY AND LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS

Eligibility to apply for this funding is limited to nonprofit organizations. Awards are subject to the availability of funds being appropriated by Congress. Each proposal received will be evaluated according to the factors listed in this solicitation, after which the State Conservationist will develop one or more cooperative agreements, with specific terms of the WRP for each proposal accepted. This request for proposal is subject to the provisions found in 7 CFR, Parts 3015 and 3019, the Uniform Administrative Requirement for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Non-profit Organizations that set forth the procedures to be followed when submitting grant proposals and the rules governing the evaluation, award, and administration of grants/cooperative agreements. Other guidance documents include 7 CFR, Part 3051, the Audits of Institutions of Higher Education and Other Non-profit Institutions, and OMB Circular A-110 and A-122.

For general project requirements, the following cost items are considered to be allowable uses of Federal funds:

- a. Costs associated with vegetative restoration including the acquisition of seedling, planting, site preparation, and overhead expenses.
- b. Costs associated with hydrology restoration including the cost of the installation of water control measures such as levees, dikes, earth plugs, structures, and overhead expenses.

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PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the WRP is to protect, restore and enhance the original hydrology, native vegetation, and natural topography of eligible lands; restore and protect the functions and values of wetlands in the agricultural landscape; help achieve the national goal of no net loss of wetlands; and improve the general environment of the country. There are an estimated 65,000 acres to be restored in Louisiana under this agreement. The acres are located primarily in Northeast and Central Louisiana. The cooperator will be responsible for the implementation of restoration as outlined in NRCS specifications, to include site preparation, obtaining the required seedlings, installation of water control structures, and quality control. Cost sharing by the cooperator is anticipated. There will be substantial involvement between NRCS and the cooperator during the performance of the work, establishing a “partnership” during performance.

WETLAND VALUES

First and foremost, habitat for wildlife and migratory birds, including threatened and endangered species, better water quality, reduced soil erosion, reduced flooding, recharge of groundwater reserves, and educational, scientific, recreational and aesthetic benefits are realized through WRP. Eligible applicants will have thorough knowledge and experience in the achievement of these values.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Restoration of the hydrologic regime and the native plant community on WRP areas in accordance with a restoration plan including designs and specifications provided by NRCS.
2. Projects will range in size and complexity, and will be located across the State of Louisiana. The average WRP tract is 500 acres (See enclosed map).
3. Typically the project areas will be farmed wetlands and farmed wetland pastures with at least 30 percent of the area restored to the hydrologic regime.
4. The cooperator will provide a time line to show the expected schedule of accomplishments and target dates for completion.
5. The cooperator will provide for the inspection and quality control of each WRP restoration contract.
6. The cooperator will furnish the NRCS a monthly status report of work in progress.
7. The cooperator will complete LA-CPA-33A compliance check worksheet according to NRCS specifications and the design check-out sheets for water control structures.

NRCS will:

1. Provide a Contracting Officer's Technical Representative to participate in the planning and management of the cooperative agreement and coordinate activities between the cooperator and NRCS.
2. Provide, at no cost to the cooperator, training and technical assistance in preparation of restoration including necessary worksheets for compliance and quality control.

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3. Conduct an initial briefing at NRCS state office in Louisiana within 30 days after the award. The purpose of the meeting will be review the goals and objectives of the project.
4. Provide oversight and evaluation of the restoration projects.
5. Provide designs and specifications.
6. Delineate boundary areas including the easement area, hydrologic restoration area, wildlife food plots, natural regeneration areas, etc.

EVALUATION FACTORS

Initially, all application packages will be reviewed to confirm that the applicant is an eligible recipient and to ensure that the application contains all of the items specified in the Application Content section of this announcement. Each complete application from an eligible recipient will then be evaluated by an evaluation committee. The applications will be evaluated using the following criteria that are listed in descending order of importance:

1. Organizational capabilities (40%). The adequacy of organizational resources and experience to successfully manage and perform the project. Share in a common mission that supports the restoration, protection, and enhancement of wetlands. Capable of providing in-kind contributions and other sources of financial support toward meeting the objective of the project.
2. Project personnel (30%). The adequacy of the proposed personnel to successfully perform the project, including qualifications and experience, the various disciplines represented, and the relative level of effort proposed for the professional, technical and support staff. The reasonableness and feasibility of the applicant's approach for successfully achieving the objectives of the project within the required time frame.
3. Understanding the intent of the program (30%). The applicant's recognition of the project and the full understanding of the intent of the Wetlands Reserve Program.

SPECIAL AWARD SELECTION FACTORS

After evaluating all applications received, in the event that insufficient funds are available to award to all meritorious applications, NRCS will consider the following special award factors in the award decision.

1. Priority will be given to the applications from organizations that share in a common mission area.
2. Priority will be given to the prioritized wetland restoration projects and not based on location of sites.
3. Priority will be given to the applications that demonstrate the ability to successfully achieve the objectives of the project within the required time frame.
4. Priority will be given to applicants who have the highest probability of providing in-kind contributions and other sources of financial support.

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SELECTION

Each proposal will be evaluated and ranked in accordance with the evaluation factors listed above. Discussions may be held with each applicant regarding the applicants experience, the proposed plan of action, or alternative courses of action. After selection, NRCS will enter into negotiations with the selected applicant(s) to discuss cost and the terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement to be signed. The cooperative agreement will contain a list of the WRP contracts to be restored.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE AWARD

1. The cooperator will comply with the Special Provisions outlined in Attachment A of this solicitation.
2. The program or activities conducted under this agreement will be in compliance with the nondiscrimination provision contained in the Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (Public Law 100-259); and other nondiscrimination statutes; namely, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and in accordance with regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture (7 CFR-15, Subparts A & B) that provide no person in the United States shall on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, or handicap be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance from the Department of Agriculture or any agency thereof.
3. The agreement will be administered in accordance with 7 CFR, Part 3015 and 3019 and OMB Circular A-110 and A-122.
4. The cooperator will attend an initial briefing to be held within 30 days of award.
5. Within 30 days after the initial briefing, the cooperator shall deliver a detailed action plan and schedule for accomplishing the project. The action plan and schedule will be based on the priorities established by the NRCS.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Contact Patti D. Woods, Contracting Officer, (318) 473-7645 or FAX (318) 473-7831; Billy R. Moore, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, (318) 473-7755.